

WE ARE TR!

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New Tech Tools Engage Students



Spring 2015

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UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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**Prepare your
child for new
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New Technology Builds 21st Century Skills

Technology is a driving force in today's job market and will continue to push the boundaries of what we believe is possible. That's why it's important that we teach students the 21st century skills they will need to be prepared for college and beyond. Our district recently leased 4,000 Dell laptops for seventh- through 12th-graders and 6,000 tablets for kindergarten through sixth grade. And beginning this year, I am proud to announce

that Twin Rivers will be partnering with Microsoft to implement new software and training in our classrooms across the district!

Our choice to partner with Microsoft and invest in technology as a learning tool also goes hand-in-hand with the transition to Common Core State Standards. Students will be able to use the new technology to research, collaborate, and create and share multimedia presentations while learning — all of which are aligned with the goals of Common Core to keep students

engaged and thinking critically. Though we are just in the beginning phases of this partnership, I am excited about the potential for our students to learn in new and immersive ways and stay competitive in the future. We are TR — working together as one!

-Dr. Steven Martinez
Superintendent of Twin Rivers Unified School District



Microsoft Vice President of U.S. Education Margo Day and Superintendent Dr. Steven Martinez are partnering to impact the students of Twin Rivers. Photo courtesy of Twin Rivers

TR Talk



"What's Your Most Valuable Tech Tool for Learning?"



Photos by Mike Blount

"My favorite technology tool at school is the SMART Board. It's bigger and brighter so kids pay more attention. Teachers can also make learning fun by using sound effects."

Kyle Francis, sixth-grader at Rio Linda Preparatory Academy



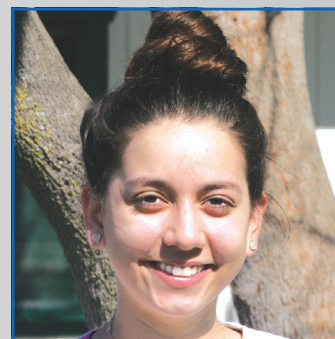
"The computers at our school are very important for learning because it allows us to do things faster. If we're working on a project, we can do research on the Internet and we can look up information about our project online without having to print it on a piece of paper."

Yohana Aguilar, eighth-grader at Rio Tierra Junior High School



"I think it's the Internet because it's there whenever you need it. When it comes to homework, you can access your teachers by emailing them and they can get back to you. I appreciate it because in class, you can't always get one-on-one time with them, but online they can help you with an assignment."

Dakota Yacouv-Cubillas, eighth-grader at Smythe Academy of Arts & Sciences



"I believe that a laptop or computer is the best tool to use because you have access to so many things: the Internet, Google, a calculator. We can also use them to work with each other on group projects. We can share things using Google Slides. It makes it easy to do our work."

Annette Contreras, eighth-grader at Smythe Academy of Arts & Sciences



"I really like the SMART Board. Instead of being crouched around the teacher and one computer, everyone can see on the SMART Board. You can also play educational games on it. It's a great way to prepare for a test while having fun."

David Loreto, sixth-grader at Rio Linda Preparatory Academy

The Language of Opportunity

Rio Linda High School senior fluent in three languages by Mark Lore

Rio Linda High School senior Ashley Her earned the Seal of Biliteracy, an award that recognizes fluency in speaking, reading and writing in one or more languages other than English.

Photo by Louise Mitchell

"The biggest part for me is having an award during the graduation ceremony. It shows you earned something."

Ashley Her
Rio Linda High School senior



Student Spotlight

Ashley Her is fascinated by language. The Hmong-American Rio Linda High School senior speaks three, in fact. Growing up, Her learned Hmong from her parents, who are both immigrants from Laos, while simultaneously learning English from her older siblings.

The 17-year-old added French to the list during high school, and has become proficient enough to earn the state Seal of Biliteracy through Twin Rivers. When Her graduates this spring, she and other students who qualify will go through a special ceremony recognizing their skills in speaking, reading and writing in at least one or more languages besides

English. Approximately 100 TR students will receive the seal. Another 85 students are scheduled to take a language of interest test administered by the Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE). The seal will also appear as a special distinction on their diplomas.

The number of students pursuing recognition of their achievements in biliteracy continues to grow. Approximately 330 students have earned the Seal of Biliteracy through Twin Rivers since 2011, mostly in Spanish, although some students achieved seals for German, Hmong and Russian. Students can earn a seal in a language they've learned either at home or through formal study. Students in grades kindergarten through eight are also put on the Seal of Biliteracy pathway, which builds awareness on the importance of learning multiple languages.

While Her recognizes the importance of learning different languages in an ever more globalized economy, she admits it's also nice to simply be recognized for her hard work.

"The biggest part for me is having an award during the graduation ceremony," Her says. "It shows you earned something."

Her completed four years of language coursework and recently passed the qualifying exam to earn the Seal of Biliteracy in French and English. Her says her strong work ethic made it easier to earn the distinction.

"I do my schoolwork every day, so it wasn't so hard to prepare," Her says.

Her was encouraged by her counselors and foreign-language teachers to obtain the seal for French. And she's not stopping there. Rio Linda High only offers Spanish and French, so Her is also preparing to obtain her Seal of Biliteracy in Hmong through SCOE.

Her says her parents still struggle with English, so she sees the value in language courses. Next on Her's list is Korean, a language she was drawn to at an early age. Her says she may want to study business after graduation, and working in the Korean entertainment industry sounds appealing.

"I was exposed to Korean music, and watched Korean entertainment," she says. "I felt like it brought out a different side in me. I'm really in love with their entertainment industry."

Whether it's Korean pop music or some other business, Her knows biliteracy will likely play a role. But she's taking things one step at a time. For now, she's hoping recognition of her language skills can help her with the first step of her career goals by making her an attractive candidate for colleges.

"I'm focusing on getting into a good school," Her says. "Then I'll figure out what to do."

SEAL OF BILITERACY



Twin Rivers supports dual-language learning at an early age by providing a pathway for its students. Foreign language classes begin in middle school, and by the time students reach eighth grade, they're recognized for their work with a Pathway Award.

When students graduate high school, they have the opportunity to obtain the state Seal of Biliteracy, an award given by the district to

recognize a student's proficiency in two languages. In an increasingly global economy, learning one, two or even three languages gives Twin Rivers students a clear advantage in the future job market.

English Language Learner Director Graciela Garcia-Torres says California was the first state to offer the Seal of Biliteracy (eight states now offer it), and issues 20,000 to students every year. The recognition includes native

speakers of Spanish and Hmong who complete the requirements to demonstrate biliteracy.

Students can earn the seal by showing proficiency in English, in addition to receiving at least a 3.0 grade-point average in foreign language coursework, or taking a county test. Garcia-Torres says letters are sent to eligible students, and that schools encourage students to take advantage.



Principals of Twin Rivers listen to an address by Microsoft Vice President of U.S. Education Margo Day about the partnership between the technology powerhouse and the district. Photo courtesy of Twin Rivers

"We're partnering with the district to bring the most impactful, engaging learning experience so that children can have the opportunity for a greater life."

Margo Day
Vice president of U.S. education, Microsoft

Looking to the Future

Microsoft partners with Twin Rivers to transform classrooms
by Mike Blount

While technology is changing the world we live in, a partnership between Microsoft and Twin Rivers will change learning environments throughout the district. Beginning in 2015, the technology powerhouse will begin working with Twin Rivers to implement the latest software and equipment into schools to help prepare students for the future. The partnership came about after Superintendent Steven Martinez reached out to Microsoft for guidance in using technology to teach Common Core last year.

Microsoft Vice President of U.S. Education Margo Day visited the district office in February to announce the partnership and address principals about the importance of using technology as a teaching tool.

"In the last two years, 90 percent of the world's data was created, and by 2024, one trillion devices will be connected to the Internet of Things," Day says. "We really do have the opportunity right now to transform the

way that teaching and learning is being delivered in the classroom so that students can really dive into an engaging and immersive learning experience."

Day also discussed how adding new technology into Twin Rivers classrooms provides students access to devices that may otherwise be out of reach.

"We've had a digital divide in this country for far too long," Day says. "When I think about equality and access for all, irrespective of social and economic considerations, Twin Rivers is doing the right job in investing and bringing technology into the classroom to break down that equality gap so that kids from any background can tap into their potential without having the ball and chain of lack of opportunity holding them back."

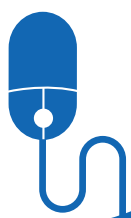
Day also toured the district's newly acquired Bay D. The 20,000-square-foot facility was purchased through a one-time \$2 million grant from the state and will

potentially house the information technology department and teachers on special assignment (TOSAs) who will teach the new technology to classroom educators.

While the partnership is still in the planning stages, Day says she is excited about working with Twin Rivers to help it improve student outcomes with new technology. Several Microsoft programs and products are currently being utilized in other school districts as a result of similar partnerships, including Microsoft Office, Skype and the Surface tablet. Day says Microsoft products offer students the ability to collaborate on projects, communicate beyond the classroom and engage with multimedia.

"We're all in and Twin Rivers is all in, because at the end of the day, what we care about is your children," Day says. "We're partnering with the district to bring the most impactful, engaging learning experience so that children can have the opportunity for a greater life."

TECH SUPPORT



Twin Rivers' partnership with Microsoft will transform classrooms with educational software. But the district's commitment to enriching student learning with technology goes beyond simply placing these tools into schools. The district has hired two education technology coordinators and increased its TruTech team members to a total of 19 districtwide. TruTech team members are a mix of current classroom teachers and instructional teachers on special assignment (TOSAs) who specialize in training teachers and facilitating professional development on the integration of technology in instruction. This will help train teachers on the new technology, as well as help them design curriculum that will take advantage of multimedia and interactive elements. TruTech members will also create video-based tutorials for teachers to access on their own schedule.





High-Tech Teaching Tools

by Mike Blount

New technology is changing the way students are learning

“Giving students access to technology provides them more opportunities to acquire knowledge and techniques to showcase their understanding.”

Daniel Latcham
Woodlake Elementary School teacher

Imagine a classroom where a student learning about geography can use a video chat application to speak with students in a classroom in Kenya and ask them about the country they live in. Technology can be a powerful tool for learning, and that's why Twin Rivers is transforming classrooms to help students achieve their potential and prepare for the world's ever-evolving future.

In 2014, the TRUSD administration set a goal to offer one laptop for every three students enrolled. Through an agreement with the California Educational Technology Professional Association, the district leased 4,000 Dell laptops for seventh- through 12th-graders — 2,878 have

already been delivered to school sites; an additional 722 will be rolled out over the next three months. The district also purchased 6,000 tablets for kindergarten through sixth grade. Nearly half have already been delivered to the elementary schools. The arrangement also allows Twin Rivers to trade in the technology every five years.

Executive Director of Information Technology Marty Schloegel is in charge of getting out the new computers to each school.

“The district has always been trying to push technology out to the classrooms as best as possible,” Schloegel says. “We were able to leverage a deal with

Microsoft to put the latest software on these laptops and give students a chance to develop skills on software that's used by most businesses in the world. The agreement also allows each student's family to download five copies of Microsoft Office 2013 for free. It's a great arrangement.”

Students will be able to not only use the new technology to deepen learning in classrooms every day, but also to prepare for the state's first-ever computer-based

year-end assessment aligned to the new Common Core State Standards. Schloegel says teachers in the district are helping elementary students develop the skills they will need to excel at online testing.

Another big advantage to using new technology to teach Common Core standards is student engagement.

“Most students are digital natives already,” Schloegel says. “They've been using smart phones and laptops since they were little. This is a way to keep them engaged and allow them to learn things in a way they are already familiar with. It's also great for collaborative learning.”

Schloegel says there are many ways that the new laptops will help students learn collaboratively and interact with the curriculum.

“We purchased software that allows teachers to put subject matter online that students can work together on to do group problem-solving,” Schloegel says. “All of these things are happening to keep students engaged.”

Woodlake Elementary School teacher Daniel Latcham says the new equipment allows his students to think more critically about what they're learning.

“Giving students access to technology provides them more opportunities to acquire knowledge and techniques to showcase their understanding,” Latcham says. “Teaching has also become more fun since incorporating technology because I have the ability to draw from multiple sources of information and try new teaching practices.”



Woodlake Elementary School teacher Daniel Latcham uses tablets to teach his students a math lesson.
Photo by Louise Mitchell

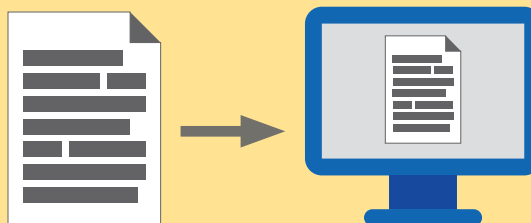
REAL-WORLD TECH TOOLS

Microsoft products are ideal for teachers because they can help them create immersive and engaging learning experiences for their students. Here are a few examples of how Microsoft software can be used in the classroom:



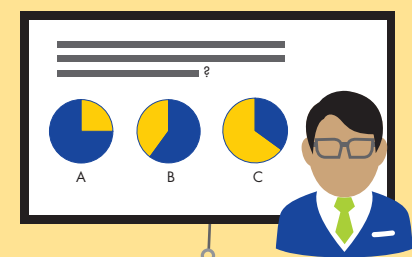
SKYPE:

Microsoft's free video-chat application can be used by students to communicate with their teacher and collaborate with their classmates outside of the classroom. It can also be used to connect with classrooms around the world.



ONENOTE:

This note-taking software allows students and teachers to collaborate on documents and access them anywhere they are connected to the Internet.



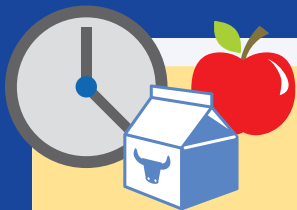
POWERPOINT:

Students or teachers can create their own presentations.



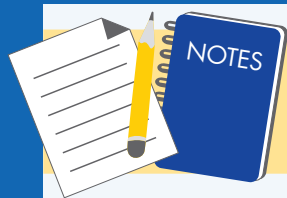
TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Twin Rivers students in grades three through eight, and 11, will take the Smarter Balanced Assessments between now and June 11. Here are a few tips to help you prepare your children for success:



START TEST DAY OFF RIGHT.

Make sure your children have a good night's rest, eat a healthy breakfast and avoid stress by having plenty of time to get ready for the day.



TALK ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF ASSESSMENTS.

Take time to chat with your children about how exams will help show what they know. By testing their knowledge and abilities in a subject, teachers are able to understand how they can better prepare students for future grades, college and career.



PRACTICE THE TESTS AHEAD OF TIME.

Help ease any worries your children might feel about taking this new type of exam. Take practice tests online by visiting <http://caaspp.org>. Click on "Practice & Training Tests." Then select the student interface and log in as a guest by clicking "sign-in."

If you have more questions, talking to your children's teachers or principal is the best place to start. Call or stop by the office or visit the website of your children's schools for more information about upcoming assessments and dates. You can also find out more about the Smarter Balanced Assessments at www.smarterbalanced.org.

Students use technology throughout the year to help prepare them for the new computer-based Smarter Balanced Assessments.
Photo by Louise Mitchell



Finding a Smarter Balance

by
Brittany
Wesely

New year-end exams better measure of student knowledge, growth

Public school educators across the country are transforming their classrooms through the implementation of Common Core Standards. Building on those standards, Twin Rivers provides students with a well-rounded education that prepares them for the challenges of the future. The new academic standards emphasize not only subject matter, but also critical thinking, analytical writing and problem-solving skills. As Common Core Standards are raising expectations of what students need to know and be able to do, the methods by which students are tested must also change.

Enter Smarter Balanced — the next generation of end-of-year exams that measure student knowledge and teacher success in a whole new way. To do so, the Smarter Balanced Assessment System has two unique features. First, the tests are no longer conducted on paper with multiple-choice answers, but are instead computer-based and administered online.

"Part of getting students college- and career-ready is using computers," says Lori Grace, executive director of curriculum and instruction at Twin Rivers. "We can do a lot of things on computers that a paper and pencil test just doesn't allow us to assess."

To prepare for the computer-based exam, students utilize technology throughout the year. Also, for the first time this February, students were able to take a computer-based practice test called Illuminate. Students will practice with Illuminate three to four times per year in the future.

In addition to being computer-based, Smarter Balanced exams are also adaptive, which means that the exam questions get easier or more difficult depending on how the student responds. As the exam customizes itself to the test-taker, it more effectively evaluates what the student does and does not understand.

"Because of the adaptive nature of the test, we get a better understanding of what the student truly knows," says Chris Arnold, coordinator of assessment, research and evaluation at Twin Rivers. "They really have to have an understanding of the standards to answer the questions because there is much less multiple choice and a lot more of having to show a skill."

Because it's computer-based and adaptive, Arnold says Smarter Balanced Assessments are truly smarter exams that evaluate how well students understand and apply their knowledge. Arnold gives the example of line graphs.

In the previous California Standards Tests (CST), if a student was given a question about line graphs, that student would see four pictures of different graphs and would fill in a bubble next to the one that looked correct. This allowed students to guess answers — and perhaps they'd guess correctly, but that correct guess wouldn't accurately reflect how much the student actually knew.

With Smarter Balanced Assessments, students will use the computer mouse to actually draw a line on the screen themselves and show that they are able to perform the function correctly.

Grace says Smarter Balanced is a much better way to test student knowledge.

"We're asking students to show their knowledge in a variety of ways rather than multiple-choice tests, because that's just not what's happening in the real world," she says.

"We're asking students to show their knowledge in a variety of ways ..."

Lori Grace
Executive director of
curriculum and instruction

Behind-the-Scenes Heroes

Classified staff making a difference every day
by Evan Tuchinsky



“To work with the kids and have them as part of our lives ... it really touches me.”

Brenda Childress
Cafeteria manager

Support personnel represent the backbone of a school system, keeping the operation going while often remaining out of the spotlight. Twin Rivers proudly recognizes the contributions of a half-dozen of these staff stars as the 2015 Classified Employees of the Year.



Keenya Powell
Program specialist, Career Technical Education

For 10 years, Keenya Powell has helped high school students discover their potential. She’s also advanced herself, from guidance resource tech to program specialist in the Career and College Options Department. She spends a lot of time counseling students on their futures, rotating among four campuses. The appeal of her job is “the kids, absolutely,” Powell says. “Just watching their faces when they figure something out that they’re capable of or have the opportunity to do — that look that they get is just the best thing ever!”



Brenda Childress
Cafeteria manager

After two decades in a company office, Brenda Childress traded her pencil for a mixing spoon and began cooking in a school kitchen. She worked her way up the ranks, and now, 18 years later, she manages the cafeterias at Highlands, Miles P. Richmond and Pacific high schools. To Childress, it’s not just a job; she’s particularly proud to help feed students from low-income households, who often depend on the nourishment of school meals. “To work with the kids and have them as part of our lives ... it really touches me,” she says.



Eric Crenshaw
Head custodian

Eric Crenshaw has always had deep connections to Grant Union High School. He grew up just two blocks from campus. His father, Bill, was vice principal and his godfather, Larry Brown, was principal. Yet Crenshaw moved away before freshman year and was never able to attend there. Later, he found his way back “home” to Grant, where he’s worked for 15 years. Crenshaw’s Grant pride runs deep — he even sports a memento from the 2008 state football championship. “I get a thrill every time I wear my ring,” he says.



Kathy Young
School office assistant

Returning to Frontier Elementary School last year following five years in the district office “was like coming back home,” Kathy Young says. That’s because she previously worked as an office assistant for Westside Preparatory Charter’s Frontier Campus. “The most important thing I do at work is welcome all visitors who come to our office and to respond to their requests in a timely manner,” she says. “If I do my job well, then all the other people at our school will be able to do their job well.”



Carthan Davis
Bus driver

While working as an architectural designer, Carthan Davis one day encountered a woman with a bus pin on her lapel. He struck up a conversation with the woman, a local school bus driver, that motivated him to take up driving as a second job. He’s been driving a bus for five years, and enjoys interacting with kids on his route. Davis also takes his job — and the trust placed in him — seriously. “Not just anyone can become a bus driver; it takes a lot of work and a lot of training,” he says. “There’s a lot of responsibility ... you’ve got anywhere from 25 to 30 lives in your hands, and you have to protect them.”



Martha Florez
Bilingual para-instructional assistant

Martha Florez had been volunteering at her daughters’ school, Woodlake Elementary School, when she learned the district was hiring Spanish-speaking classroom aides. She spent a decade as an instructional assistant at Northwood Elementary School, then returned to Woodlake eight years ago. In addition to assisting with lessons, she serves as an interpreter and a community liaison. “Like a teacher, I wear many hats and help the students the best I can — and the families, too,” Florez says. “I do love working with parents and at community events, but I love my children.”

Photos courtesy of Twin Rivers



Keeping Students Engaged

Twin Rivers is committed to improving student outcomes. By implementing new technology in classrooms — including laptops, tablets, software and SMART Boards — students have the opportunity to learn in ways that keep them engaged and promote critical thinking. This technology works hand-in-hand with Common Core curriculum and gives students the ability to develop 21st century skills that will prepare them for college and beyond.



Visit www.twinriversusd.org for:



GET CONNECTED

Upcoming ways to participate with Twin Rivers

FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

The Twin Rivers Visual and Performing Arts Department presents the fifth annual Festival of the Arts, featuring student art and performances by middle school and high school students throughout the district.

Thursday, April 9
5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
McClellan Convention Center
5411 Luce Ave.
McClellan, CA 95652

SPECIAL PERFORMANCE OF THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

Come see a special performance by the Sacramento Theatre Company of Gilbert & Sullivan's musical, "The Pirates of Penzance" and help raise funds for Project DREAM at its 11th Annual Fundraiser. Enjoy the appetizers, no-host bar, silent auction and great entertainment. Tickets are \$60 and can be ordered online at www.dreamtwinrivers.org.

Sunday, April 26
5:30 – 9 p.m.
Sacramento Theatre Company
1419 H St.
Sacramento, CA 95814

YOU CAN MAKE DREAMS COME TRUE



Project DREAM is a community-based nonprofit organization that helps raise funds to provide students at Twin Rivers Unified School District schools with academic enrichment activities. To help Project DREAM continue to support field trips for Twin Rivers students, donate your unwanted clothes and shoes to the big yellow boxes located at all Twin Rivers schools.

Find out more about how you can impact a child's life with Project DREAM.

Visit www.dreamtwinrivers.org
Email project.dream@twinriversusd.org
Follow at www.facebook.com/supportprojectdream

Project
DREAM

YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK

Twin Rivers is continuing efforts to renovate its campuses and facilities. Over the next three years, the district will spend more than \$25 million on 100 different improvement projects at all schools.



COMPLETED

- New heating, ventilation and air conditioning units installed at Grant Union High School and Harmon Johnson Elementary School
- Exteriors painted at nine school sites
- Asphalt improvement at six sites
- Restroom renovation at five sites
- Playground equipment installed at four sites
- 14 wheelchair ramps installed across all sites
- Shade structures installed at four sites
- Carpet installation in 136 classrooms across all sites

IN PROGRESS

- Tennis court installations at all four high schools (Grant, Rio Linda, Foothill and Highlands high schools)
- New painting projects at four schools
- Planning for asphalt paving at five schools for spring 2015
- New pool at Grant High School

